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INFO : MUNICH, VIENNA, USNATO

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SUBJECT : Soviet View of US Strategic Arms

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As the Vienna round of SALT is about to begin, an article by V. V. Larionov in the March issue of USA gives Moscow's public view of the debate in the USA over strategic arms developments and policies. The current debate is said to center on whether or not new strategic arms systems should be developed. Recent Administration decisions on MIRV and Safeguard indicate, according to Larionov, that a new and dangerous cycle in the arms race has in fact already begun. Without answering his question, Larionov queries whether this new round can be stopped at birth, or whether it may lead to "stormy" further growth. Quoting from McGeorge Bundy, he declares that decisions in this area are now as critical as those in connection with development of the hydrogen bomb.

Glancing at recent US defense expenditures and policy statements, Larionov asserts the US is beginning to lay greater emphasis on developing strategic weapons systems, whereas in the early 1960s the growth in US defense spending largely concerned conventional arms. During most of the 1960's the US was emphasizing "flexible response" which, with the Vietnam war, meant concentration on conventional weapons. Now this pattern is rapidly changing, he declares. Even Vietnamization, in essence, is supposed to free more funds for strategic arms. This increase in strategic expenditure indicates the US is gradually entering a new arms race round, and further work on MIRV and ABMs "inescapably strengthens" this hypothesis.

Larionov declares an "imposing opposition" is building up in the US against a further development of strategic arms. This group not only includes "progressive strata" of American society, but also representatives of the "loyal opposition" in US "ruling circles." Even a number of experts who until recently participated actively in making

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2

defense policy have now joined those who oppose a new arms round. The article mentions George Rathjens, McGeorge Bundy, Jerome Wiesner, and Herbert York in this context.

Contending that those who oppose new strategic arms development base their opinions on "realistic evaluations," Larionov credits them with five basic arguments:

- 1) a new stage in the arms race will not give the US any real advantage, and increases the danger of war through miscalculation;
- 2) "stocks of arms" cannot effectively buy US security;
- 3) US strategic superiority (even if it were possible) cannot be converted into political influence;
- 4) ABM and other systems cannot be so effective technically as to justify costs involved; and
- 5) huge expenditures involved would do serious damage to the US economy, and divert funds from solving domestic problems.

Larionov maintains that such views are shared by a "remarkable" number of Senators, Congressmen, and public figures. Dismissing the "myth" of a Soviet threat, the article declares that Senators who in 1969 voted against Safeguard deployment felt the arms race to be more dangerous than the USSR.

Larionov cites Rathjens to assert that US-Soviet strategic capabilities are now nearly equal. Rathjens considers that, if the US embarks on a new arms round, even a temporary advantage would prove illusory. For example, technical problems associated with ABM systems indicate they cannot provide a sure defense; furthermore the cost of ABM development is enormous.

Ranged against the "realists" are those who favor strategic arms expansion, led by Defense Secretary Laird and Under Secretary Packard. This group also has its academic supporters, for example Herman Kahn. According to Larionov, Kahn believes Safeguard is necessary as a means of gaining US political advantage even if an ABM system is not technically effective. Safeguard can be used to negotiate from a position of strength - a type of "blackmail". Moreover, Kahn is said to believe that forcing the Soviets into a new arms spiral will lead to the USSR's economic exhaustion.

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3

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Larionov is ambiguous in describing President Nixon's position in/strategic debate. He reports the President spoke of the need for US strategic superiority during the election campaign, and promised to make that the basis of US policy. Later, the President stressed the need for strategic sufficiency - without, says Larionov, making clear what this means. Sufficiency may sound like a step toward moderation, but that depends on one's interpretation, Larionov concludes. In short, the article tends to picture President Nixon as leaning more toward the proponents of increased arms development than toward those who would limit the arms race.

COMMENT: Coming as it does shortly before the resumption of SALT, Larionov's article appears intended to cast doubt on the Administration's reasoning behind Safeguard and MIRV and its intentions in SALT. By citing prominent Americans who oppose the development of Safeguard and MIRV Larionov hopes to create the appearance of Soviet objectivity on the issues involved while at the same time making it clear that he is more convinced by their arguments than by those of the Administration. To the extent that Larionov expresses approval for opposition arguments, one might infer that similar views may be held in certain quarters/^{here} regarding Soviet missile developments. However, he confines himself to the US scene, and gives no hint of any internal Soviet debate.

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